

What is claimed is:

1. A method for notification of return of equipment 100 having at least one function to a home station, comprising the steps of:

5 providing said equipment with a reminder alarm 106 -8 and reminder alarm timeout for return of equipment to the home station, said reminder alarm timeout having a default timeout configuration;

optionally configuring the reminder alarm timeout configuration at the home station;

arming 104 the reminder alarm timeout; and

10 when the timeout expires, generating the reminder alarm 105 to return the equipment to the home station.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of upon return of the equipment to the home station, resetting 104 the reminder alarm timeout configuration to said  
15 default configuration.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the generating step further comprises the step of when the equipment is not essential, disabling 109 the at least one function of the equipment.

20 4. The method of claim 1, wherein:  
the providing step further comprises providing a default reminder alarm progression;  
the configuring step further comprises optionally configuring the progression for said reminder alarm; and

the generating step further comprises generating a sequence of progressive reminder  
25 alarms according to said configured progression.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein said configuring step further comprises setting the progression to one of an incremental increase and random variation in at least one of the intensity of the reminder alarm and frequency of the reminder alarm.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said generating step further comprises generating the reminder alarm as at least one repetition of at least one of an audio tone 106, an audio message 106, a visual signal 108, and a video text message 107.

5 7. The method of claim 6, wherein:  
the providing step further comprises providing a default reminder alarm progression;  
the configuring step further comprises optionally configuring the progression for said reminder alarm; and

10 and the generating step further comprises generating said at least one repetition as a sequence of progressive reminder alarms according to said configured progression.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
providing said home station as a touchpad input device that accepts a password input via the touchpad 203;

15 inputting a password via said touchpad 203; and  
resetting 104 said reminder alarm to said default timeout configuration on input of a predetermined password.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
20 providing said home station as a mechanical key reset device 300 that resets the reminder alarm when mechanically engaged with said reminder alarm; and  
including a key controller in said provided reminder alarm that resets 104 said reminder alarm to said default timeout configuration on mechanical engagement with the mechanical key reset device 300.

25 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:  
providing said home station as one of an infrared transmitter and a radio frequency transmitter 103, having a given range that continually transmits a reminder alarm reset signal;  
and

including a corresponding one of an infrared sensor and a radio frequency receiver 103 in said provided reminder alarm that resets said reminder alarm to said default timeout configuration on receipt of said transmitted reset signal 104,

wherein said reminder alarm is continually reset 104 whenever said equipment is within  
5 the given range of the home station.

11. An apparatus for notification that equipment 100 having at least one function is due for return to a home station, comprising:

a reminder alarm 105 for notification that the equipment is due for return to the home  
10 station, said reminder alarm having a default timeout configuration;

a timeout device 102 204;

a control device 101 201 to

optionally configure the reminder alarm timeout configuration at the home  
station, and

15 arm the timeout device with the configured timeout, and

when the timeout expires, generate a reminder alarm 105 to return the equipment  
to the home station, said alarm 105 generated according the timeout  
configuration.

20 12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said control device 101 201 is further configured to upon return of the equipment to the home station, reset 104 the reminder alarm timeout configuration to said default timeout configuration.

25 13. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein said control device 101 201 is further configured to when the equipment is not essential, disable 109 the at least one function of the equipment.

14. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein:

the reminder alarm timeout configuration further comprises a default reminder alarm  
30 progression;

the control device 101 201 is further configured to:

optionally configure the progression for said reminder alarm, and  
generating a sequence of progressive reminder alarms according to said  
configured progression.

5

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein said control devices is further configured to set the progression to one of an incremental increase and random variation in at least one of the intensity of the reminder alarm and frequency of the reminder alarm.

10

16. The method of claim 11, wherein said control devices is further configured to generate the reminder alarm as at least one repetition of at least one of an audio tone 106, an audio message 106, a visual signal 108, and a video text message 107.

15

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the control device is further configured to:  
provide a default reminder alarm progression;  
optionally configure the progression for said reminder alarm; and  
generate the at least one repetition as a sequence of progressive reminder alarms  
according to said configured progression.

20

18. The method of claim 11, wherein:  
said home station is a touchpad 203 input device that accepts a password input via the touchpad 203; and  
said control device 201 is further configured to reset 104 said reminder alarm to said default timeout configuration on input of a predetermined password via the touchpad 203.

25

19. The method of claim 11, wherein:  
said home station is a mechanical key reset device 300 that resets 104 the reminder alarm when mechanically engaged with said reminder alarm; and

said reminder alarm further comprises a key controller 101 that resets 104 said reminder alarm 105 to said default timeout configuration on mechanical engagement with the mechanical key reset device 300.

- 5           20.     The method of claim 11, wherein:  
              said home station is one of an infrared transmitter and a radio frequency transmitter,  
              having a given range and that continually transmits a reminder alarm reset signal; and  
              said reminder alarm further comprises a corresponding one of an infrared sensor 103 and  
              a radio frequency receiver 103 that resets 104 said reminder alarm 105 to said default timeout  
10           configuration on receipt of said transmitted reset signal,  
              wherein said reminder alarm 105 is continually reset whenever said equipment is within  
              the given range of the home station.